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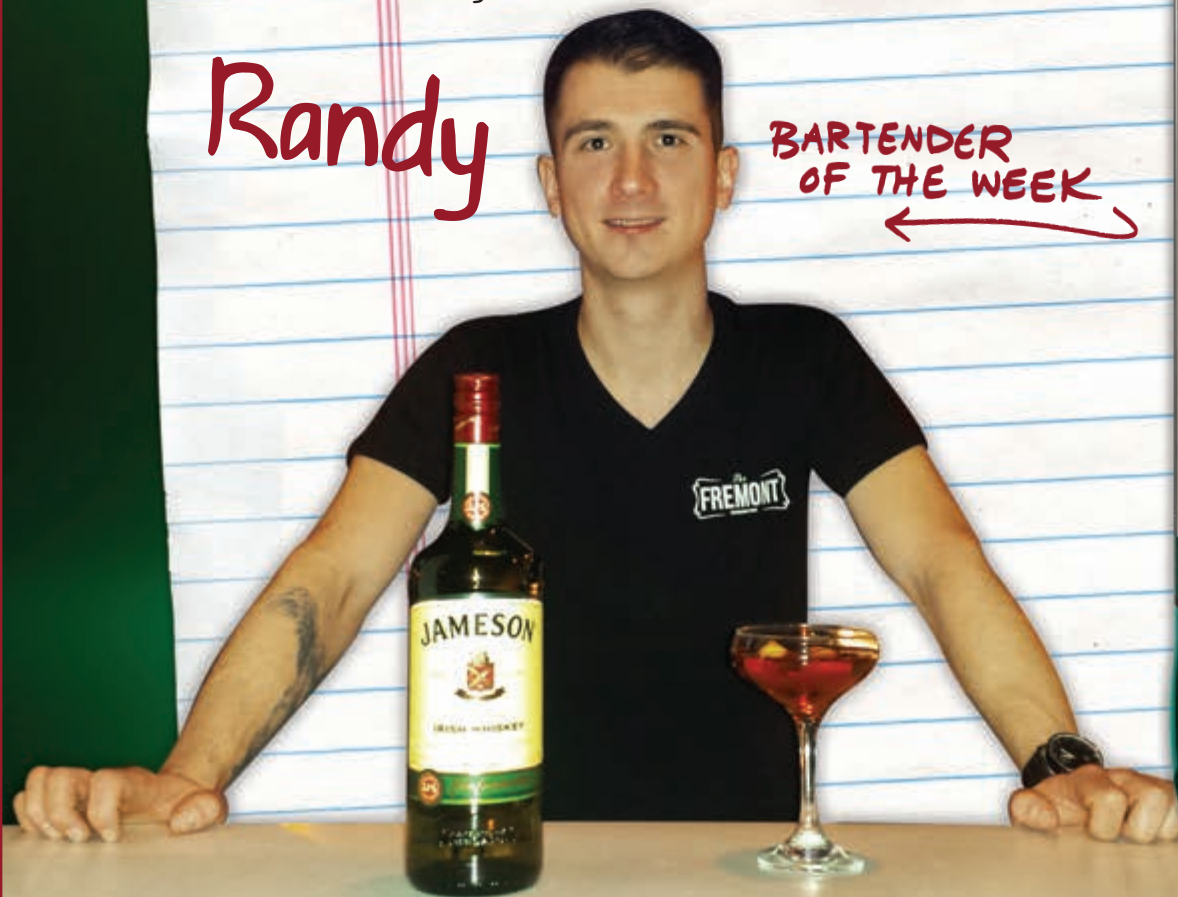
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BARTENDER
OF THE WEEK
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THE SHORTLIST



Faces of the Studio 54
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TERRORISM

27

Number of Americans killed on
Christmas day due to gun violence

36

Average number of daily gun homicides
in the U.S. in 2015

27

Combined number of gun homicides for
Austria, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia,
Estonia, Bermuda, Hong Kong,
and Iceland in an entire year

34

Number of Minnesota women
killed in domestic violence incidents
last year

**“When is the white, middle-to-upper-class,
conservative male going to finally get a break
in this country? When?!”**

Reader Dru Markham, responding to “Racist Facebook troll fired from Archer Daniels Midland,” at citypages.com.

PIGMENTATION

SHORT, MINORITY WOMEN get all the breaks. So *Minnesota Nice*, an “advertainment” show scheduled to air on Fox 9, tried to right this historic injustice by casting solely for a tall, “Caucasian” woman to play its “luxury product placement” cohost.

The “forward-thinking” show took immediate blowback on Facebook for its pigmentation policies. So producer Brock Dombrowski did an about-face, announcing that he might be looking for a black cohost after all. Neither Fox 9 nor its parent network would discuss the issue.

CAPITALISM

COMCAST, which takes its customer service cues from that guy who yells at kids to get off his lawn, has long been known as America’s Most Hated Cable Provider™. But it now has a new award to hang in the executive dining room: America’s Most Hated Internet Provider™.

A tally of complaints to the FCC between January and November of 2015 found a stunning 11,812 registered against Comcast. That was nearly double the combined number launched against its three closest competitors — Verizon, AT&T, and Time Warner.

A Troll Gets Torched

Who would have thought there's a downside to being a Facebook racist?

Debate tactics and success all you want. Black Lives Matter has scored at least one unambiguous victory: exposing all the racist trolls in your Facebook feed who suddenly feel the need to tell you what they've always thought about black folks.

Take Brad Schultz, who left a bilious message on the Black Lives Matter Minneapolis page — on Christmas Eve, no less — over the Mall of America and airport protests.

"You dumb fucking niggers," Schultz posted. "Get out of town with your bullshit protesting. The loser life deserved to get shot for not cooperating with police. You make yourselves look worse. Get off your ass, get a job, do something ... Just leave, white people don't like you."

And Merry Christmas to you too, Brad!

The "loser life" is probably a reference to Jamar Clark, the black man whose November death in a Minneapolis police shooting

spurred the most recent round of protests.

Within hours, Schultz had changed his tune, seen the error of his ways, and apologized. Either that, or he realized other Facebook users had managed to immediately deduce his identity.

Their sleuthing was helped by the fact Schultz was posting under his real name, and had listed his hometown, Mankato. According to his social media accounts, he's a fan of the Minnesota Vikings and the new *Star Wars* movie.

His Facebook page also listed his employer, Archer Daniels Midland. That part was key for online justice warriors; maybe they couldn't fill Schultz's heart with love and understanding by Christmas morning, but they could at least let Archer Daniels know it had employed a Klan version of the Grinch.

Schultz saw the writing on the wall, and tried to backpedal.

Black Lives Matter has scored one unambiguous victory: exposing all the racists in your Facebook feed.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"I'm very sorry for the rude comments I made," he wrote. "In no way is my workplace affiliated with these comments. Please delete them."

Here, the troll finally got something right. Archer Daniels Midland, the food processing behemoth based in Chicago, is not affiliated with Schultz's comments — as of last week, when it fired Schultz.

"ADM has concluded its investigation regarding recent social media comments made by an ADM employee in Mankato, Minnesota," the company said in a state-

ment. "As previously stated, these remarks are unacceptable and do not reflect ADM's values."

In a related story, if someone is looking to hire a social media expert, there's a newly unemployed guy in the Mankato area who knows all about how Facebook works — for good, for evil, and for revenge. Some sensitivity training required. —MIKE MULLEN

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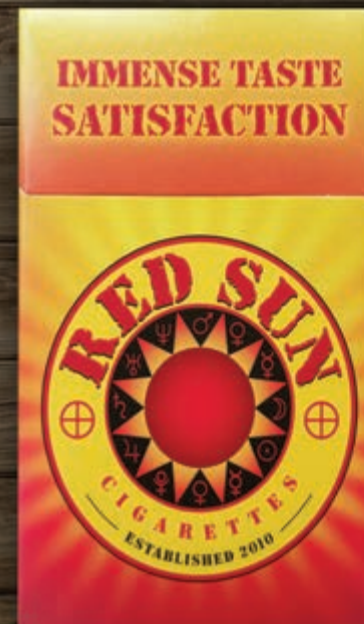
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Minnesota Top 10 News Stories of 2016

An occasionally fond look back at the year to come



Mike Mullen

My New Year's resolution for 2016 is to procrastinate less. It sounds easy enough, except that I've been putting this off since 2009.

But no more! It's a new year and a new me. That's why I'm filing my obligatory 2016 Year in Review ahead of time.

10. Cano draws heat for trip to hot planet

Embattled Minneapolis City Council Member Alondra Cano has already caught shit for taking international flights with public money, and for releasing constituents' personal information online. This year, Cano uses Elon Musk's SpaceX rocket ship for a taxpayer-funded trip to Mars, explaining she needed to see if the red planet is suitable for future colonization by her Ninth Ward constituents. (She also gives an interview wearing a "Green Lives Matter" T-shirt.)

The \$10 billion price tag raises eyebrows, but Cano fires back at her critics, publishing a series of tweets that expose their cholesterol levels, high school grades, and embarrassing downloads on iTunes.

9. Minnesota Vikings win the Super Bowl!

So claims Minneapolis police union boss Bob Kroll. He admits he did not watch the game, but is wholly confident the local team won anyway.

DFL U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison counters that the Vikings could have been eliminated earlier in the playoffs, but wishes there had been different referees.

DFL U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who tends to look both ways before putting on her seatbelt, expresses "concern" about the Super Bowl, and suggests convening a bipartisan study to look into the score.

8. Spineswipe stock soars

Medtronic's stock price soars as investors and surgeons rave about the debut of the "Spineswipe." The new device replaces damaged vertebrae with an automated slot that swipes the patient's credit card for direct payment to the "Irish" company.

7. Minimum wage creeps toward livability

In August, the state's minimum wage automatically ticks up to \$9.50. The new wage quickly tanks the food industry — though not how people had expected.

The new level allows tens of thousands of fast food workers to finally afford the hamburgers they serve. Minneapolis and St. Paul are forced to hire 10,000 temporary street cleaners to remove the resulting vomit.

6. Vikings slaughter 25,000 birds

The Vikings' new downtown stadium opens to mixed reviews. Fans flood the stadium for the home opener, but festivities are ruined when 25,000 birds crash-land into the confusing glass roof.

Unbothered, owner Zygi Wilf and his banker friends take a seat on benches in the new semi-public-depending-on-the-day park outside the stadium. The moguls fail to notice the assembly of crows behind them, who are amassing one by one to take their revenge.

5. Syrians raid supermarket

Three Syrian refugees — a man, his wife, and their child — are allowed into Minnesota. They go to a Trader Joe's in St. Louis Park and, at the little boy's request, buy cheese curds. They go home and watch TV.

4. Dayton's vanishing line in the sand

Gov. Mark Dayton stakes an immovable position, announcing he absolutely refuses

Climate change comes to small-town Minnesota when a mega-storm rises in Austin and never leaves.

to sign a tax-cut bill unless Republicans agree to college scholarships for low-income fetuses, minorities, miners, and the walleye population of Mille Lacs Lake.

But the governor forgoes his demands when Republicans compromise by offering the miners reduced-price lower back pillows.

3. Itasca, but you still wouldn't tell me

"The Itasca Group," a shadowy policy cartel of business leaders who wield weird influence without anyone knowing, will

continue to act in secret. Sometime in 2016, Itasca will meet and decide ... absolutely nothing you need to know about. So don't you worry your pretty little head about anything that happens in the next 12 months.

2. The Great Austin Tornado of 2016

Climate change comes to small-town Minnesota in a big, bad way when a megastorm rises in Austin and never leaves. A giant twister shreds the town, then occasionally reconstructs it. Science skeptics cite this as evidence that the climate has always gone through cycles. Most everyone else just stares in frozen horror.

1. Super-sized Tuesday surprise

Days before the "Super Tuesday" primary vote, the Clinton Foundation pledges to divert money — once earmarked for health programs in Africa — into a Bravo-TV-in-every-home program in toss-up states. Hillary Clinton, campaigning in Minneapolis, calls 2016 "The Year of the Woman. Unless You'd Prefer a Man. I'll be whatever you want."

The pandering fails, and Bernie Sanders, the cranky Jewish uncle America didn't realize it needed, sweeps to victory. The peasants rejoice. **MF**

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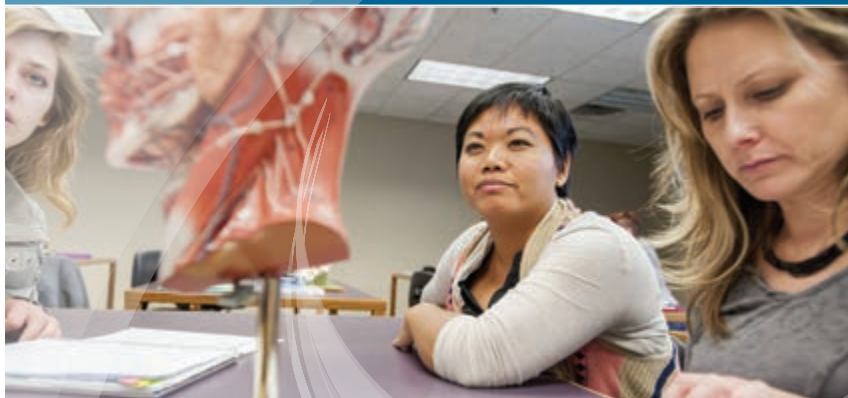


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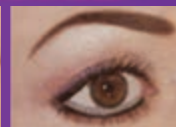
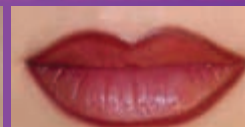
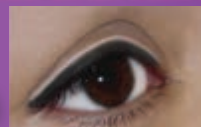
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THE WRATH OF MO

How intimidation and mismanagement nearly destroyed a cherished Hmong charter school

By Susan Du

On the eve of her resignation, Superintendent Mo Chang looks up from the head of a long table in the basement library of Community School of Excellence. She peers into a crowd of cold stares. Seated wall to wall, cramped between the bookshelves, are the teachers and staff that run her school, their faces steely, hardened with resentment.

She has chosen to step down, Mo announces. After nine years of growing Community School of Excellence from the germ of an idea to one of St. Paul's largest Hmong charter schools, "Auntie Mo," she says, will be leaving for good.

One teacher stands to speak. He offers no kindness to gild Mo's announcement. Instead he raises the abrupt firing of third-grade teacher Eric Johnson the day before.

"Even if a new classroom teacher is found quickly for Johnson's class, their education has already been impacted, today, by his dismissal," says Rob Aurand, who teaches English as a second language at the school. "His special needs students may very well believe that he left because they have done something wrong."

Another teacher joins him, weeping and recounting the staff who had left in droves over the years. "Is this what it is supposed to be like in a school setting?" she asks.

"I feel so horrible. What about his kids?"

The audience fiercely nods along. Deep in the back of the room sits Eric Johnson with his face flush. Mo is stony-eyed and silent.

For Mo, Johnson was a constant foil, the one teacher who made it his personal mission to challenge her leadership. He was a union spokesman, agitator, and whistleblower on CSE's many public scandals throughout his term.

And to many people, Johnson's termination on the day before Mo's resignation reeked of last-minute revenge.

ILLUSTRATION BY JON PROCTOR

II. THE PRIDE OF THE HMONG COMMUNITY

For Twin Cities' Hmong students, Community School of Excellence was the solution to a public school system that was not built for them.

William Song, president of CSE's parent-teacher organization, remembers his early days at Johnson High School in St. Paul, a time rife with homesickness, of embarrassing bouts of indigestion brought on by unfamiliar American lunches rich in dairy, of having to play charades anytime he wanted to communicate something to the teacher.

As the first generation of Hmong arrived here in the 1970s and 80s, they found a public education system with few Hmong translators and a limited understanding of its new group of students.

So a decade ago, when Mo Chang first approached Song with the vision of a community school where the Hmong could raise their children to remember the language, culture, and history of their people, he threw his full support behind her ambition.

Song enrolled his six children at CSE. His 7-year-old daughter can now read folk tales in Hmong. His eldest sons have taken the annual CSE trip to Laos and Thailand to visit their ancestral homes. Each winter, his family attends CSE's famous Hmong New Year celebration, a colossal one-night



COLIN MICHAEL SIMMONS

CSE is one of St. Paul's largest Hmong charters with nearly 1,000 students and a budget of \$9 million.

festival for 3,000.

He was successfully raising a Hmong family in Minnesota. CSE was successful, too. Over the years, Mo grew CSE from 175 students to a K-8 school of 1,000 strong. Each child brought about \$9,000 in state funds, making for an annual budget of \$9 million. In 2010, the school unveiled a new building at 170 Rose Avenue, illuminated with murals of Hmong village life and draped with tapestries depicting Hmong children at play. Two years later, CSE received a prestigious elementary and middle school International Baccalaureate accreditation. A waiting list formed.

As Mo left her fingerprint on the school's every success, she became a recognized champion of education in St. Paul's Hmong community. CSE's second-floor hallway displayed a series of oil paintings honoring great Hmong leaders throughout history. There was General Vang Pao, who had commanded the Hmong Army against communist North Vietnam, and there was fabled fighter pilot Lee Lue, who'd flown more than 5,000 missions before being shot down over the skies of Laos.

At the end of this hall of venerated Hmong heroes hung a painting of a beaming Mo Chang.

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III. A CULTURE OF FEAR

Behind the velvety curtain of CSE's celebrated public image, discontent brewed among Mo's rank-and-file staff.

While CSE would easily drop more than \$20,000 on its annual New Year celebration, or upwards of \$92,000 on an international trip for 30 students, some years the school would employ just one social worker for a thousand children. Students went another year without a single registered nurse.

By 2015 the middle school had only a part-time International Baccalaureate curriculum coordinator. The elementary school had none. Teachers say they were denied IB professional development workshops.

Test scores were dismal. In 2011, only five percent of students met expectations in science. In 2013, reading scraped an all-time low of 15 percent proficiency. Last year, scores made a slight recovery to meet 23 percent proficiency in reading overall, 37 percent in math, and 12 percent in science. Still, CSE regularly performs well below state averages.

Former Hmong language and culture teacher Mee Yang says she used to be told, two months before state standardized tests, that she needed to help students crunch for math and reading during Hmong class. Mee Yang was licensed to teach language arts, but not math. "When it comes down

to that, what do you want me to do?" she says. "I wasn't sure if I could be teaching math, quite honestly."

Another part of the challenge of raising student performance was CSE's tremendous 26 percent teacher turnover rate, says former fourth-grade teacher Bong Xiong. Within the span of a year, new hires would fully adapt to the bilingual learning needs of CSE's students. The problem was keeping them around.

“IT WAS RUTHLESS WITH MO. SHE GOT RID OF PEOPLE RIGHT AND LEFT, PEOPLE WHO HAD KIDS GOING TO THAT SCHOOL.”

"People were scared to speak up," Xiong says. "It was ruthless with Mo. She got rid of people right and left, people who had kids going to that school. We used to joke around, 'Oh no you've gone and put a target on your back. You're on Mo's Most Wanted.' If she wanted to get you, she'd find whatever way she could."

The teachers' working environment

was the students' learning environment, he says, and the teachers' working environment was one of fear.

Office assistants Joua Lor and Mai Nhia Lor say Mo would not allow them to eat lunch together or speak to each other at work. They could not email to meet up after hours.

When Mai Nhia Lor was hired as an office assistant in 2012, Mo took her aside before the school year even started to relay

Mai Nhia started "tabooing" — dating a boy with the same last name — which is akin to incest in Hmong tradition, even though the two were not actually related. Mai Nhia told the girl's mother, and she told Mo.

The children's parents urged the young couple to break it off. Others in the Hmong community would ostracize them if they persisted, parents on both sides cautioned. The girl accepted their advice, but the boy was harder to convince. Heartbroken, he lagged in his classes.

Mai Nhia says Mo was concerned for the boy and began to call the two children down to her office at odd hours of the day. The girl later told her mother that Mo would serve them food and drink and have the two meet in secret during class. It happened a handful of times, sometimes with Mo's supervision and sometimes without.

The girl became increasingly unhappy about the secret meetings, and eventually told her mother. But as furious as the girl's mother was, she says she never confronted Mo. Mai Nhia still worked at CSE, and the girl's mother says she was afraid that angering Mo would thwart Mai Nhia's career. Instead, she transferred all her children to St. Paul Public Schools.

"My kids told me they learned better at CSE," she says. "They loved the activities at the school and they liked the teachers. I did too. But I had to move my kids out."

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IV. THE CRUSADER

Eric Johnson is a wiry, hawkish man with a face worn gaunt from years of stress. Like many grade school teachers, he has a calm, kind disposition. But when he chronicles his tenure at CSE, he speaks with the overly measured diction of someone well-acustomed to the language of lawsuits.

In 2005, he returned from a three-year stint teaching English in Japan in search of a school that valued teachers with bilingual education experience. He found CSE, where he was hired as a fourth-grade teacher.

From the beginning, his personal relationship with Mo was coolly cordial. It wasn't long before tensions began to simmer. Johnson was inundated with unhappy reports from his fellow teachers and staff, tales of Mo's intimidation tactics and controlling behavior. Leery of the scattered claims, Johnson began to canvass past and present CSE employees to build a more complete picture of what happened behind Mo's closed doors.

Several of Johnson's coworkers pointed him toward an internal policy at CSE that prevented teachers — who are state mandated reporters — from notifying Child Protection Services if they suspected their students were being abused at home.

Mo wanted to be the first to know so that she could visit the student's home and personally evaluate claims of abuse. She would then make the final call.

Eric Johnson and Bong Xiong, former teachers and union organizers at CSE, believe they were fired in retaliation for challenging Mo's power.

More than 90 percent of CSE's students speak English as a second language. Mo says that she feared miscommunication could lead some teachers to get the wrong idea.

"For example, it's common in our culture that when a child is sick, the parents rub a silver bar on their forehead, their arms, their feet as a treatment," Mo says. "Sometimes that leaves marks that look like little bruises. Sometimes people see those marks as signs of abuse and immediately call Child Protection Services."

The result, she warned, would be innocent Hmong parents taken from their homes in handcuffs, their children confiscated by the state.

Yet teachers feared Mo's instincts left some children open to repeat abuse. In 2012, a kindergartener appeared in class with a glossy black eye. He claimed his mom's boyfriend punched him in the face and whipped him with a guitar.

The child's teacher, who asked not to be named, wanted to call the authorities. She says Mo ordered her to back off.

"I knew in my heart of hearts that it was abuse," the teacher said. "[Mo] said she wanted to find out for herself if it was a cultural thing instead."

Two months later, that student returned

to school with fresh bruises, she says, and told her his mom had finally called the cops. The abusive boyfriend was in jail.

The teacher eventually resigned. She says she was unable to cope with the moral strain of working in a school where she was not allowed to intervene in cases of apparent child abuse.

She wasn't the only one.

In the spring of 2013, a second-grade student confided in teacher Megan Deutschman that he was being abused at home. The nurse recorded injuries that fit the child's story.

Deutschman emailed Mo to say she was calling Child Protection Services. According to allegations in a lawsuit Deutschman later filed, Mo notified the child's parents, called Deutschman down from her classroom, and forced her to confront them despite her protests.

Mo regards the whole Deutschman situation as a case of miscommunication. She said the parents accused of abuse reached out to her, not the other way around. During their meeting, Deutschman popped into the office, jumped to conclusions, and outed herself. It was all a big misunderstanding, Mo insisted.

Nevertheless, St. Paul police say they have an ongoing criminal investigation into Community School of Excellence's mandated reporting issues.

This was only the beginning of trouble for Mo.

V. THE TAKEDOWN

In March of 2013, while the abuse-reporting issue roiled, Mo led the eighth-grade global studies class on a trip to Thailand and back again.

In a complaint later filed in court, two chaperones described how Mo "grossly mismanaged the trip, repeatedly exposing students to risk." A couple of children were lost the very first day. After 36 hours of layovers that took the students from Minneapolis to Chiang Mai, Mo marched the group into a mall food court for breakfast. Afterward, their convoy of buses headed into the hills for a lightning tour of a Hmong village. They pulled beside a roadside market by midday, where the students collapsed in exhaustion at the foot of a landmark Buddha statue.

One chaperone noted that they hadn't done a headcount since landing in Thailand. They were short two girls.

Mo frantically backtracked in search, while the chaperones regrouped at the hotel they'd booked for the night. There they found the missing girls, who had been left all the way back at the food court.

The following morning, chaperones asked Mo to make time for headcounts. They wanted her to come up with a plan in case students were separated in crowds. They say she dismissed them as being

"too Western-minded."

The students were set free to roam night markets. According to the chaperones' complaint, when the group touched down at the Thai-Burmese border, in an area plastered with posters warning of sex trafficking, students had free rein there, too.

Once, while the buses were rolling, a motion-sick girl started vomiting at her seat. The chaperones say they signaled the driver to pull over so the child would have a moment to breathe. When they phoned Mo to tell her to wait, Mo was furious. One van did not have the power to hold up the group, she yelled. The delay would make her late to a meeting with the principal of a local Thai school.

The chaperones say they returned from the trip shaken by the superintendent's erratic behavior.

Johnson compiled these accounts from staff and teachers and mailed it all to the Minnesota Department of Education. Flooded with cries for help, MDE investigated the Thailand trip and found that by ignoring basic safety precautions, Mo had subjected 34 children to maltreatment.

Yet another tip would lead the department to audit CSE's food services program. Investigators arrived at the school unannounced and watched as students punched in breakfast codes even if they didn't feel like eating.

Paraprofessional Billie Yang remembers that one day after students were bused off to an all-day field trip where meals were provided, Mo specifically reminded him to key in their lunch codes anyway. Each student is worth \$2.50, she said.

Investigators with the Department of Education found a long list of infractions, and fined CSE \$200,000.

In the summer of 2013, CSE's charter authorizer, Concordia University, got involved. As the organization responsible for overseeing CSE, Concordia directed the school to hire a law firm to investigate a host of allegations, from failure to report child abuse to employee intimidation. Ratwik, Roszak, and Maloney in Minneapolis reviewed emails and memos and interviewed about 30 staff. The resulting report was devastating.

If angry parents approached Mo about having been roped into child abuse investigations she had no idea about, she would direct her wrath toward the teachers who reported, investigators found. When she was made aware of abuse investigations in advance, she compromised criminal investigations by warning parents ahead of law enforcement.

Investigators concluded that even though CSE changed its policy in 2012, Mo continued to insert herself, threatening and discouraging staff from mandated reporting.

Through intimidation and bullying, Mo had created a "culture of fear and distrust."

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side had acknowledged the daily reality of the CSE staff, and a moment of triumph for Johnson. But working under Mo soon became even more difficult.

Beleaguered by state investigations, surrounded by nameless informers, Mo began to pull employees into her office to interrogate them one by one, trying to find out who was leaking what.

At the peak of the investigations, which Johnson deems the “dark days” of CSE, employees were given abundant hints to shut up or risk termination. Those who spoke out were placed on “improvement plans” that read more like the missives of a totalitarian regime than the professional reviews of grade school teachers:

“You will not engage in any negative comments or be a part of any negative staff conversations or meetings. Document how you refrain from creating a negative spin on issues, and align your comments to reflect and support the decision of the executive team.”

In the midst of Mo’s crackdown on dissent, Johnson suggested forming a union for protection.

Teachers surreptitiously pitched the idea throughout their own ranks before and after work in hurried whispers. Three Hmong office assistants recruited the Hmong-speaking kitchen and custodial staff, who often complained of having to come in on the weekends to cook for big

events without overtime, Johnson says.

Mo pushed back. She and her administrators isolated the teachers from their assistants, the custodians from the cooks, to deliver a sequence of anti-union speeches.

But the vote was held and the union was formed. And a week and a half following the elections, three Hmong union organizers — Mai Nhia, Joua Lor, and Youa Yang — were fired for “insubordination.” Bong Xiong, the fourth-grade teacher, was terminated over winter break.

“The administration made an example of these guys,” says Billie Yang. “When that happened, a lot of people felt that if they kept getting involved in this movement, they might not be returning in the fall.”

VI. NOT GOING DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT

In February 2014, CSE’s authorizer, Concordia University, finished reviewing the findings of each investigation and wrote to the board that its decision to retain Mo was unacceptable.

“It should be obvious to the CSE’s Board that [Mo’s] performance and misconduct warrants dismissal,” the letter read. “A change in leadership is imperative.”

Concordia gave CSE 21 days to come up with a plan for removing Mo from her position and establishing effective leader-

ship for the school. Otherwise, Concordia would cancel its contract with CSE.

Mo’s supporters rallied in defense. Tou Ger Xiong, an educational consultant for CSE, disseminated a petition claiming that Concordia wanted to both fire Mo and shutter their community school. At parent-teacher organization meetings, Mo and Xiong blamed CSE’s tainted reputation on white teachers who did not care to learn Hmong culture.

The March 2014 board meeting was held in CSE’s big gym and stacked with parents who were ushered in by the busloads. Mo pulled 300 students out of the after-school program to sit in the bleachers for two hours while parents demanded an explanation from Concordia representatives.

In the midst of mounting community outrage, the young Hmong teachers of CSE felt that their voices had no place.

“Since Mo was able to build and open CSE, she’s able to be seen as a leader in the community,” Mee Yang explains. “That’s why it’s been so hard for us to speak up against her. Because we’re raised to respect our elders, we’re afraid to say bad things about someone who is seen as a ‘Hmong leader.’”

In February 2015, Johnson filed an unfair labor practices complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, which eventually ruled that union organizers whom Mo had fired for “insubordination” were in

fact victims of retaliation. CSE had to pay ex-employees \$40,000 in lost wages and was forced to repent, in three languages, for punishing union activity.

In total, CSE had racked up \$300,000 in legal fees.

Still, the board of directors did not dismiss Mo.

Concordia wrote CSE in September 2014 to sever ties with the school. It also elected to abandon sponsorship of the seven other charter schools under its care.

Suddenly, CSE was in actual danger of dissolving if it failed to find another authorizer by June 2016.

As the deadline loomed, Minnesota Guild, a new charter-authorizing body, showed interest. But they had received Concordia’s previous letters of lost confidence. They had seen the reports describing Mo’s mismanagement and watched as the board wallowed in inaction.

Brad Blue, director of Minnesota Guild, says he doesn’t get to make governance decisions for schools, but he did nudge the board to make a choice.

The idea took root: In order for CSE to survive, Mo had to abdicate.

Still, as far as the general Hmong community was concerned, Mo was CSE, and CSE was Mo. William Song, PTO president, feared that a sudden ousting would shatter the fragile school.

“Yes, I think Mo should step aside for

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the sake of the school, and for the sake of the families, but if we were just pushing her out, the school would fall apart," he warned.

It's a painful lesson in the history of the Hmong people. After General Vang Pao was exiled from Laos and the CIA retreated from Southeast Asia, the Hmong people left behind were exposed to torture and imprisonment at the hands of a vengeful communist majority.

"When the system kicks out our leader, the country falls apart," Song said. "It's very hard for us to build the community together again. We are still hurting from the war. We are still feeling betrayed."

Meanwhile, Johnson watched with

paid to replace it.

For six months, CSE avoided the topic. It wasn't until the end of October, the following school year, that a supervisor again dredged up the incident with Johnson. Fixating on the family's anger over police involvement, the supervisor demanded to know who called the cops. Johnson held his ground.

The following day, he was ordered to pack his things. Johnson's colleagues called foul.

"EJ does what he does because he cares about the students so, so much," union president Blythe Inners says. "He goes outside his comfort zone because he sees something that needs to be done, and he

"WE'RE AFRAID TO SAY BAD THINGS ABOUT SOMEONE WHO IS SEEN AS A 'HMONG LEADER.'"

mounting frustration as the evidence of Mo's misconduct piled up in the public record with little actual change at CSE to show for it. In April 2015, he took a risk that would eventually lead to his termination.

Posters appeared in the hall one day: A child with hearing loss could not find a \$1,000 teacher microphone that helped him listen in class.

Johnson and other teachers questioned their own students. One third-grade boy said he'd seen the hearing aid among his fourth-grade sister's things at home.

Johnson told administrators of the boy's confession, hoping they would confront his sister.

CSE sent a representative to the girl's home to retrieve the hearing aid, but her family refused to return it. The student with hearing loss struggled through the rest of the school year, Johnson says.

Looking back, he agonizes over why he became so involved in the case. "You see someone drop the ball a billion times. If you're a teacher and you want to help kids, wouldn't you just pick up the ball and go?"

An anonymous complaint was made to police. When the cops showed up at the fourth-grade girl's home, her parents were outraged. They demanded to know how Mo could allow an issue at her school to bring the police to their doorstep.

Johnson says Mo ordered him into private meetings to find out whether he was the one who called the cops. Johnson refused to cooperate, citing his whistleblower rights. He would not name the other teachers who helped in the search.

Though the hearing aid was never found, the suspected student's family eventually

fixes it. He doesn't make trouble just to make trouble. He wanted to make this school a better place."

The day after Johnson was fired, Mo announced her resignation at the monthly board meeting. She turned over leadership of CSE to Bao Vang and Kazoua Kong-Thao of the refugee nonprofit Hmong American Partnership.

Her last day, Halloween, was a lavish affair. Educational assistants were ordered down to the kitchens from their tutoring sessions to help wrap 2,000 eggrolls for a commemorative lunch in Mo's honor. She distributed business cards with her personal phone number and email throughout the cafeteria, reminding all she would ever be their auntie.

Johnson's class got a substitute. Two months after his firing, CSE has not found another full-time third-grade teacher.

VII. A HESITANT HOPE

When Blue strolls through the halls of CSE now, he is just as impressed as the first day he laid eyes on the school, many months ago. Even in its "dark days," he could tell the school had been founded on a very good idea.

"I love what they've done with the murals, the culture, the language immersion, the focus on the global perspective," Blue says. "Here, Hmong students come to a place where they can be safe, where they can learn. I'm all in."

CSE veterans are not so readily assuaged. "I've been promised change before, I've been given glimmers of hope," says Aurand, the ESL instructor. "Largely they're false,



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so confident would definitely not be the word. I'm hopeful."

Minnesota Guild might encourage transparency, accountability, respect, and everything else staff have wanted for so long, he says, but the ultimate responsibility of turning things around falls to interim directors Bao Vang and Kazoua Kong-Thao.

Bao Vang admits she doesn't have the full story of all that CSE has gone through. But she has arranged individual meetings with each employee to find out how the chaos came to be.

"If the culture of CSE was a culture of fear, this administration will turn that around," Bao Vang said. "I know a lot of damage has been done, and I know it will take a lot of time to restore faith in each other. I cannot control what people feel. What I can control are my actions."

Inners, CSE's sole remaining union organizer, says ongoing contract negotiations would be an opportune time for the new administration to show its colors. She wants an objective discipline process and basic grievance options.

"These are steps that the administration will need to show that they are following, and these are the steps that staff can take if they disagree with those decisions," she says. "We have never had anything like that before."

Meanwhile, CSE tried to deny Johnson's unemployment benefits, accusing him of bullying the students into telling him the location of the hearing aid. On Christmas Eve, unemployment Judge Christopher Palkovacs decided those allegations were entirely unbelievable.

"In light of the credible evidence that school administrators told union officials they needed 'to control' Johnson, it is far more likely that Johnson was discharged in retaliation for reporting administration abuses to government regulators and the press," Palkovacs wrote.

CSE's union has filed for wrongful termination on Johnson's behalf.

In a law office on the ninth floor of the IDS Tower, Johnson looks back at his time working under Mo's vigilant eye. He's lost 15 pounds from the anxiety.

"I think I stayed on this mission because I thought I was making a lot of progress," he says of the four-year duel that made casualties of both him and Mo.

Among Johnson's legal papers is a file of letters from his students, illustrated in marker, composed in the loving chicken-scratch of children.

One reads, "Dear Mr. EJ, thanks for teaching all of us good things. Most I like that you are teaching us is multiplication. You are the best teacher in CSE school. I want to know where are you?"

"This is kind of the most heartbreaking aspect of the whole thing," he remarks softly. "I would really like to go back and teach my kids." ☐

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3. Butter and Parm Pizza, Burch, \$5

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1933 Colfax Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-843-1500, burchrestaurant.com

4. Field Green Salad with Lemongrass Vinaigrette, Lake & Irving, \$5

Ordinarily we wouldn't think of a salad as a meal, but the sophisticated lemongrass vinaigrette here makes it so. This friendly neighborhood bistro with a great beer list has a stealthy little secret: Japanese-influenced menu items from tempura mushroom fries to togarashi fried Brussels sprouts to furikake chicken. Those will run you a few bucks more, but let this perfume-like vinaigrette

be your gateway drug.

1513 W. Lake St., Minneapolis, 612-354-2453, lakeandirving.com

5. Tamales and Tostadas, Maya Cuisine, \$2.50

The juggernaut of local cheap eats, Maya Cuisine won our Best Mexican category last year for so many good reasons, not least of all their enormous portions and eye-poppingly low price tags. All-scratch tostadas and tamales are just \$2.50, with about two dozen permutations to choose from, including barbacoa, lengua, chorizo, and even vegetarian. So cheap it's almost charity.

1840 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis, 612-788-0244, mayacuisineusa.com

6. Vellee Rolls, Vellee Deli, \$4.50

While we like to think of the skyway system as a warm and inviting extension of our fair cities, that ain't exactly so. Much of it is a vast wasteland of fast food and junky convenience stores. So when beloved food truck Vellee Deli moved into the skyway last year, office drones had a heyday, snaking around velvet ropes in anticipation of a decent lunch. Five little crispy pork eggrolls with sweet and sour sauce are just \$4.50. How's that for a day brightener?

109 S. Seventh St., Minneapolis, 612-236-

4856, velleedeli.com

7. Colombian Street Dog, Cafe Racer, \$5

The little four-bite Colombian street dogs from Cafe Racer are more get-you-through-your-day things than a proper lunch, but girding yourself for the coming couple of hours is sometimes all a body can hope for. Plus it's a vehicle for Sriracha and cilantro aioli, the kind of condiments that could turn dregs into ambrosia.

2929 E. 25th St., Minneapolis, 612-208-1695, caferacermn.com

8. Taco Tuesdays, Unideli, \$2.50

Because it's got the hip anti-charm of being situated in the middle of the best Asian grocery in Minneapolis, we already want to love Unideli. Sometimes waits are harrowingly long, especially when you're hungry, but they do an honorable job with lots of Asian soups, snacks, curries, and even housemade Kombucha. A best-kept secret is Taco Tuesdays, where Asian-style tacos (with the likes of kimchi, bulgogi, shredded pork belly, kimchi verde, and fermented hot sauce) go for \$2.50 a pop.

2015 E. 24th St., Minneapolis, 612-721-6677, unitednoodles.com

9. Sambusas, Afro Deli, 3 for \$3.99

So popular are these savory meat-filled and deep-fried pockets, Afro Deli employs

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dish»Review



TONY NELSON

Side dishes at Revival make for a meal.

no fewer than three full-time employees to specialize in folding sambusas by the hundred, day after day. Bring a table full of them to your next function and see how people clamor to gather 'round. The green Somali hot sauce that accompanies them, "basbas," made with cilantro, chile, garlic, and citrus, is just awaiting the right branding to become the next ketchup. We want to put it on everything from eggs to hotdogs, but especially the sambusas, which come in beef or chicken.

Two locations: 1939 S. Fifth St., Minneapolis, 612-871-5555 and 5 W. Seventh Pl., St. Paul, 612-888-2168, afrodeli.com

10. Bowls of soup, Himalayan, \$4.95

Some places are humanitarian enough to offer cups of soup for under five dollars, but rarely do they offer bowls. It must be the inherent friendliness, hospitality, generosity, and selflessness, the basis of Tibetan etiquette, that makes Himalayan offer heaping bowls of fragrant Kwati (eight bean soup) and Aloo-Tama with the captivating allure of pickled bamboo shoots, for just \$4.95. Plus, you can even have it your way by choosing your spiciness level.

2910 E. Lake St., Minneapolis, 612-332-0880, himalayanmomo.com

11. Slice, Hello Pizza, \$4.50 and under

New Yorkers consider one- and two-dollar slices their birthright. Big floppy slices, cheap, hot, and good are the perfect on-the-go comestible. While we're kinda big city, yet kinda not, we don't do slice joints all that well. But Hello Pizza does, tucked coquettishly into that neighborhood intersection between Minneapolis' Linden Hills and Edina. So the next time you're hustling from one zip code to the next, grab the most authentic East Coast slice we've found around here.

3904 Sunnyside Rd., Edina, 952-303-4514, helloworldpizza.com

12. Phyllo Pies, Shish, 3 for \$3.95

Call them what you want — spanakopita, phyllo pie, spinach pie — these buttery and

flaky pastries are filling enough for a simple meal and decadent enough to be a treat. Why not make it both? Shish offers them filled with cheese or spinach, or else have two of each for \$4.95.

1668 Grand Ave., St. Paul, 651-690-2212, shishongrand.com

13. The entire appetizer and banh mi list, I Heart Pho, \$5 and under

If you are a Minnesotan unfamiliar with the life-giving properties of always cheap, always delicious Vietnamese cooking, then we mourn for you. But you're not unfamiliar, we just know it. You're savvy! Savvy enough to know that St. Paul's Payne-Phalen neighborhood now has a standup Pho joint — barebones and simple, yes, with daytime hours only. But they advertise that they don't use MSG (which is important, depending on how you feel about MSG, and some people feel very passionately indeed). Eggrolls, spring rolls, wings, and the entire banh mi list all fall under \$5.

850 Maryland Ave., St. Paul, 651-600-3724

14. Fries with Ketchup, Saint Dinette, \$5

We've got a soft spot for these because they're crinkle cut, the way we had them as a kid, poured onto a baking sheet from an Ore-Ida bag. They serve them with Heinz ketchup, the only straight-faced way to do things, and present them regally in a little silver pot.

261 E. Fifth St., St. Paul, 651-800-1415, saintdinette.com

15. Chachu, Ramen Kazama, \$4.50

Part of the frenzy around Ramen Kazama is the perfect harmony of quality food in a fast-casual setting. Exquisite, soulful cooking rings in under \$15; it's quick, but always made with care. Bring about \$12 for the ramen (these bowls are worth every dime) but for less than \$5 you can have a small bowl of chachu pork (sugar, sake, and dark soy sauce braised pork) served over rice with pickled ginger and a boiled egg. It's a very special dish, and quite nourishing. For the price, it's crazy.

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dish » Review

3400 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-353-6160, ramenkazama.com

16. Beef Tacos, Iron Door Pub, \$5

There are tacos and then there are tacos. There are little corn tortillas filled with barbacoa and al pastor and tinga and other things to ply with onions and cilantro and salsas and we love them. But there's another kind of taco — the gringo taco that comes one way only: with beef and a crunchy shell and cheese and lettuce. It's a neanderthal-esque, delicious way to put down a base for beer, booze, and perhaps more booze and more beer.

3001 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-200-9967, theirondoorpub.com

17. The Value Menu at Breaking Bread, \$5 and under

While dining out is often fancier than what you can slap together at home, it needn't be. And sometimes you just don't want it to be. You want to outsource it, yeah, but you also want to recognize it. Enter Breaking Bread, which is in the business of feeding people who are hungry. Only got a few bucks? Only got a couple? They got you. Grilled cheese, soups, tuna melts, cornbread, and salads all fall in the \$2 to \$5 sweet spot.

1210 W. Broadway Ave., Minneapolis, 612-529-9346, breakingbreadfoods.com

18. A loaf of Injera Bread, Shega Foods, under \$5

Unless you're a family of five, it's all but impossible to eat a loaf of injera in a week. It's delicious, intensely nutritious (it's calcium, fiber, and iron-rich, fermented, and even gluten-free), and its gut-expanding qualities are the stuff of legend. If you can, spend a few bucks more on the knee-buckling beef tibs or myriad other stews and slaws available at this bright and friendly grab-and-go market.

2111 E. Franklin Ave., Minneapolis, 612-341-4373

19. Hush Puppies, Butter Beans, Black Eyed Peas, Hoppin' John, and other side dishes, Revival, \$4.50 and under

We've often said that side dishes do not a meal make, but soul food is exempt from that dictum. This cuisine is all about using what you've got, the whole of it designed to be cheap and filling. And wouldn't you know it? It's turned out to be one of the world's most beloved food traditions. What you're tasting is ingenuity. Revival is a place for all the people, all the time — just watch for the crush of bodies in the vestibule night after night. While it's not cheap, it is a value place, which is of course what's so appealing about it. You won't get their already classic fried chicken for \$5 (though a two-piece is just \$8!) but the place is a veritable heaven for vegetarians on a budget.

4257 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-345-4516, revivalmpls.com

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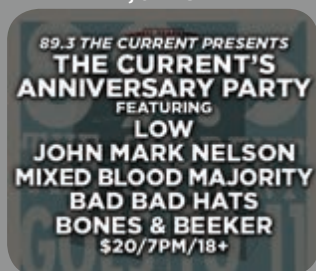
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FRIDAY, JANUARY 22



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20



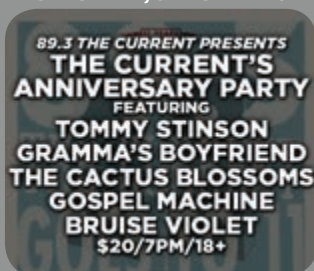
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29



SATURDAY, JANUARY 9



SATURDAY, JANUARY 23



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9



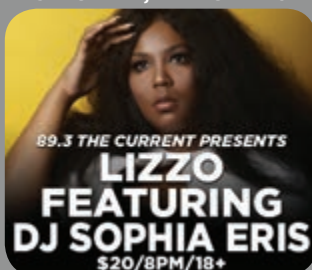
FRIDAY, JANUARY 15



TUESDAY, JANUARY 26



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25



THURSDAY, MARCH 10



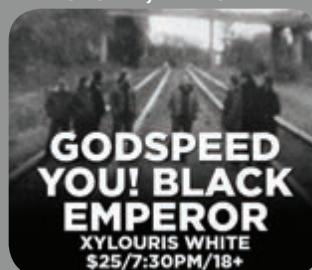
SATURDAY, JANUARY 16



FRIDAY, JANUARY 29



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26 &
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

SATURDAY, MARCH 12



SUNDAY, JANUARY 17



SATURDAY, JANUARY 30



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28



FRIDAY, MARCH 18

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- 4/03 **MUTEMATH** 18+
 4/09 **GALACTIC** w/ **BOMBINO** 18+
 4/10 **ANI DIFRANCO** w/ **CHASTITY BROWN** presented by The Cedar 18+
 4/19 **ANDREW BIRD** 18+
 4/24 *Savage Imperial Death March Tour featuring*
NAPALM DEATH, MELVINS, MELT BANANA 18+
 4/27 **COURTNEY BARNETT - SECOND SHOW ADDED** 18+

7TH ST ENTRY

- 1/06 **MARY BUE** and **LAURA NICHOLSON** w/ **STACY K** 18+
 1/07 **THE SOCIAL ANIMALS** w/ **SAVANNAH SMITH** 18+
 1/08 **THE CRASH BANDITS** *LIGHTEN UP CASSETTE RELEASE PARTY* w/ **CHARLIE SIREN, GLOW MECHANICS, AND MORE** 18+
 1/09 **FURY THINGS, THE SOCIAL DISASTER (ALBUM RELEASE), PHANTOM TAILS** 18+
 1/11 **SHOW ME THE BODY** w/ **BLOOD COOKIE** 18+
 1/14 **THE MISSING LETTERS** and **KICK** w/ **HOLY WHITE HOUNDS, BENJAMIN RAYE** 18+
 1/15 **TEENAGE MOODS RELEASE SHOW** w/ **BRILLIANT BEAST, CONSTANT INSULT, DAISY CHAINS** 18+
 1/16 **DUSTIN THOMAS** 18+
 1/17 **BOOFSQUAD & FRANKIE BASH** w/ **ELI THE PROPHET AND MORE** 18+
 1/20 **MIC Q.A & SIEED BROWN** "A FAMILY FUNCTION" 18+
 1/21 **NAZEEM X SPENCER JOLES** and **GUANTE** w/ **ANDRE MARIETTE, DIS-PLAY, PSEUDOUBT, MIKE THE MARTYR** 18+
 1/22 **CITY OF SOUND VINYL RELEASE PARTY** w/ **HOT DATE, PORNO WOLVES, MANIC PLANET** 18+
 1/23 **LOWER DENS** 18+
 1/26 **THE KNOCKS** "ROUTE 55 TOUR" w/ **CARDIKNOX** 18+
 1/27 **UMAMI** and **BAYONNE** w/ **BEASTHEAD** 18+
 1/28 **THE AMERICAN DEFORMITY TOUR PART II** ft. **INVIDIOSUS, DEFEATED SANITY, INIQUITOUS SAVAGERY, INIQUITOUS DEEDS, FACE OF OBLIVION** 18+
 1/29 **MODERN RADIO SWEET SIXTEEN** ft. **SICBAY, STNNG, FURY THINGS, B.O.Y.F.** 18+
 1/30 **DAVE RAVE AND THE GOVERNORS, RICH MATTSON AND THE NORTHSTARS, LOLO'S GHOST** 18+
 2/01 **GRIZFOLK** w/ **MAX FROST** 18+
 2/05 **MEAT WAVE** 18+
 2/06 **WET** 18+
 2/07 **MARTIN COURTNEY** 18+
 2/08 **BORA YORK** and **MASS GOTHIC** w/ **MAZED** 18+
 2/12 **ACT OF DEFIANCE** 18+
 2/13 **ANDREW RIPP** 18+
 2/14 **DIANE COFFEE** 18+
 2/17 **ANDY FRASCO & THE U.N.** 18+
 2/18 **COMMUNION: TWIN CITIES** ft. **ALLAN RAYMAN, LOLO, WHISKEY SHIVERS, MOONRISE NATION** 18+
 2/21 **CAVANAUGH (OPEN MIKE EAGLE & SERENGETI)** 18+
 2/27 **AUDIO SOCIAL DISSENT 2016** ft. **WOLF EYES, TIMMY'S ORGANISM, VIDEO** 18+
 3/01 **JULIA HOLTER** 18+
 3/02 **ELLIOTT BROOD** 18+
 3/10 **BLANCK MASS** 18+
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 3/19 **MOUNT MORIAH** w/ **ELEPHANT MICAH** 18+

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UPCOMING SHOWS AT OTHER VENUES



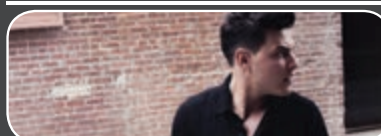
FRIDAY, JANUARY 15
HARI KONDABOLU
 at the WOMAN'S CLUB
 \$15/\$18/7PM/ALL AGES



MONDAY, JANUARY 18
 89.3 The Current presents
BULLY
 w/ **FAKE LIMBS**
 at the FINE LINE
 \$15/7PM/18+



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27
 City Pages presents
JOSH RITTER & THE ROYAL CITY BAND
 w/ **ELEPHANT REVIVAL**
 at the PANTAGES THEATRE
 \$35-\$45/7PM/ALL AGES



SATURDAY, JANUARY 30
TOR MILLER
 at BRYANT LAKE BOWL
 \$12/9:30PM/18+



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5
 89.3 The Current and KUMD present
HIPPO CAMPUS
 at CLYDE IRON WORKS (DULUTH)
 \$12/6:30PM/ALL AGES



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6
CASPIAN
 w/ **O'BROTHER**
 at the TRIPLE ROCK
 \$15/8PM/18+



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22
 First Avenue, JAM, Northrop,
 and 89.3 The Current present
JASON ISBELL
 w/ **SHOVELS & ROPE**
 at NORTHROP
 \$40/6:30PM/ALL AGES



SATURDAY, MARCH 12
 First Avenue and 89.3 The Current present
 An Evening With
CLOUD CULT
 at the STATE THEATRE
 \$30-\$35/7PM/ALL AGES



THURSDAY, MARCH 17
 Set In Stone Tour
STICK FIGURE
 w/ **FORTUNATE YOUTH, RAGING FYAH**
 at the TRIPLE ROCK
 \$15/7PM/18+



SATURDAY, MARCH 19
 An Evening with
GREG DULLI
 w/ *special guest* **DERRICK BROWN**
 at the CEDAR
 \$30/7PM/ALL AGES



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30
 89.3 The Current presents
THAO & THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN
 w/ **SAINTSENECA**
 at the FINE LINE
 \$20/\$40 RESERVED BALCONY/7:30PM/18+

- 4/07 **RA RA RIOT** at the Triple Rock
 4/24 **JEN KIRKMAN** "I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING AND OTHER LIES....." at the Cedar
 5/07 **LITTLE GREEN CARS** at the Cedar
 5/13 **NADA SURF** at the Fine Line

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1/08 **AL CHURCH** W/ TINY DEATHS, THE THREE TRES PROBLEMS (DJ SETS BY JEREMY YLVISAKER, MIKE LEWIS, AND MARTY DOSHI) 7:30PM
1/09 **THE ANNUAL BLOWOUT** W/ THE BLIND SHAKE, BIRTHDAY SUITS, RIPPER 8PM
1/10 **OUTLAW BRUNCH** W/ **THE FEDERALES** 10AM - 3PM (NO COVER/ALL AGES)
1/10 **CHARLIE PARR** EVERY SUNDAY IN JANUARY W/ AMANDA STANDALONE 7PM
1/12 **VENOM INC.** W/ NECROPHAGIA 7:30PM
1/14 **JERMAINE FOWLER** "GIVE 'EM HELL TOUR" 7PM
1/15 **SAM CASSIDY VIDEO RELEASE** W/ ACTUAL WOLF, ROMANTICA 8PM
1/16 **FILTHY ANIMALS, PANTHER RAY, CLEMENTINE** 8PM
1/17 **JAZZ BRUNCH** W/ **JAMES BUCKLEY TRIO** FT. JAMES BUCKLEY, BRYAN NICHOLS, JT BATES 10AM - 3PM (NO COVER/ALL AGES)
1/17 **CHARLIE PARR** EVERY SUNDAY IN JANUARY W/ MATT ARTHUR AND THE BRATLANDERS 7PM
1/22 **SOLID GOLD** W/ SUZIE, UMAMI 8PM
1/23 **20 DOLLAR LOVE 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL!** W/ DUMPSTER JUICE AND MORE 7:30PM
1/24 **CHARLIE PARR** EVERY SUNDAY IN JANUARY W/ SUPERIOR SIREN 7PM
1/27 **HEY MARSEILLES** 7PM
1/29 **NEW SOUND UNDERGROUND** AND **THE HEARD** 8PM
1/30 **MODERN RADIO SWEET SIXTEEN** FT. VAMPIRE HANDS, HOLLOW BOYS, THE CHAMBERMAIDS, OAKS 8PM
1/31 **OUTLAW BRUNCH** W/ **THE FEDERALES** 10AM
1/31 **CHARLIE PARR** EVERY SUNDAY IN JANUARY W/ WILD HANDS 7PM
2/04 **THE GILDED PALACE SINNERS - THE MUSIC OF GRAM PARSONS** 7:30PM
2/05 **MALLMAN** W/ THE MELISMATICS, CATSAX, LUNCH DUCHESS 8PM

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FRIDAY

MINNEAPOLIS TATTOO
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page 28

SATURDAY

CELEBRATE WINTER AT
FORT SNELLING STATE PARK

page 29

MONDAY

NEW WORKS BY
JODY WILLIAMS

*a>>>list



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WED/1/6

COMEDY

Jackie Kashian

Acme Comedy Co.

Who better to ask about the new *Star Wars* film than Jackie Kashian, the host of *The Dork Forest* podcast? “I liked it,” she says. “I was talking to a friend of mine and I said, ‘I’m trying to figure out if I liked it as much, less, or more than *Mad Max: Fury Road*.’” Her friend had a simple response. “He said, ‘Why do you have to pit them against each other? Just like them both.’” Kashian also has an interesting take on why people seem to overlook the fact that a lot of women like the *Star Wars* franchise. “This particular movie — as did *Mad Max: Fury Road* — had a strong dude, but there were some strong women characters too which, traditionally,

has not been happening.” Kashian is also a fan of the *Harry Potter* series, and the one-hour special she shot here last January takes its name from the fantasy novels: *This Will Make an Excellent Horcrux*. Kashian also had one of 2015’s strongest sets on Conan O’Brien’s show. 18+, \$15-\$18.8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday** —P.F. WILSON

COMEDY

Erik Griffin

Rick Bronson’s House of Comedy

You may recognize Erik Griffin from his role as Montez Walker on Comedy Central’s *Workaholics*. He’s also done a few episodes of the Patrick Stewart sitcom *Blunt Talk* on Starz, and is awaiting word on the fate of a pilot he shot for Showtime. “I’m on all the cool shows,” he laughs. Through the winter he’s doing standup, which may lead

to a follow-up to his last CD, *Technical Foul: Volume One*. “That was really just a funny name,” he explains. “I’ve always wanted to be a singer, and singers have volumes. The next one will be called ‘Something: Volume Two,’ but it won’t be *Technical Foul*.” While storytelling comedy is becoming more popular, Griffin is trying to concentrate on the funny. “My opinion of short storytelling is that it’s just a way of saying, ‘I don’t want the pressure of being funny,’” he states. “It’s a funny person telling a story that may or may not be funny. It’s just an alternative to standup comedy. I use the comedy and acting skills just to enhance the story. Ultimately, it becomes standup when I’m doing it, and I do enjoy that.” 18+; 21+ later shows. \$13-\$22. 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; 9:45 p.m. Friday; 9:30 p.m. Saturday; 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington; 952-858-8558. **Through Sunday** —P.F. WILSON

THU/1/7

THEATER

Out There 2016: Roosevelt

Walker Art Center

If you could swap personae, would you rather be the 26th President of the United States or the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll? It’s a question the TEAM asks in *Roosevelt*, coming to the Walker for a three-night stand starting this Thursday. Starring Libby King and Kristen Sieh, this critically acclaimed show takes the audience on a psychedelic journey from the Badlands to Graceland, examining along the way the particulars of masculinity and identity through two notorious American icons. The story follows Ann (King), a painfully shy lesbian meat

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



Jan 31

From the creative mind of Deke Sharon, vocal producer for *Pitch Perfect* and NBC's *The Sing-Off*



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SUE KESSLER

Continued From Thursday
» FROM PAGE 25

packer who channels the spirit of Elvis Presley. With the King's encouragement, Ann befriends Brenda (Sieh), a taxidermist divorcee and Roosevelt admirer. When the couple's courtship takes a wrong turn, Ann heads toward Graceland with the two iconic alter-egos wrestling over who she will become. This intimate tale encourages audiences to define themselves and embrace their truths. Special events will also take place as part of the month-long Out There 2016 festival, such as a post-show reception (Thursday), a Q&A with the artists (Friday), and workshop (Saturday). \$25; \$20 Thursday. 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. 1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-375-7600. **Through Saturday** —ERICA RIVERA

THEATER

Hard Wired

Bryant-Lake Bowl Theater

Why waste time on unpredictable encounters at a bar when one can scroll through online personality profiles from the safety of home? Such are the thoughts of Jesse and Noel, the two estranged characters at the center of Fearless Comedy Productions' latest work, *Hard Wired*. Mutually disillusioned by their recent breakup, and goaded on by their roommates, the two ex-lovers are faced with the prospect of dating in the digital age. As the ex-couple awkwardly wades into an ultra-connected dating pool where interest is gauged via status updates and flirtatious overtures are delivered through abbreviated texts, they find that making a love connection hasn't been simplified by technology. In fact, the ambiguous messages and misread intentions might just be making the whole process more complicated. Written by Susanne Becker and Bob Alberti as a one-act farce, *Hard Wired* suggests that the alleged advantages of prescreened romance hold no sway over the inexplicable laws

of attraction. \$12/\$15 at the door. 7 p.m. Thursdays; 10 p.m. Saturdays. 810 W. Lake St., Minneapolis; 612-825-8949. **Through January 16** —BRAD RICHASON

FRI/1/8

FESTIVAL

Minneapolis Tattoo Arts Convention

Hyatt Regency Minneapolis

Once they were an unmistakable signifier of a person living outside the boundaries of respectable society. In recent times, however, tattoos have become so thoroughly integrated into mainstream culture that inked skin is just as likely to be found on a college honors student as a motorcycle-riding vagabond. This widespread acceptance should be reflected in a diverse crowd at the seventh annual Minneapolis Tattoo Arts Convention. Over the course of three days, the convention will showcase strikingly original work from some of the most distinctive tattoo artists in the country, highlighting intricate, artistic designs. Unlike most art forms, however, patrons can walk away with a one-of-a-kind work rendered on their own skin. Attendees can enter those tattoos in a series of contests, including a category acknowledging work conceived and completed onsite over a single day. Even those with unmarked skin will likely be fascinated by the carnival-like assortment of entertainment, including such brazenly idiosyncratic options as extreme piercing showcases, human suspension demonstrations, performances from rubber-limbed contortionists, and other examples of physical malleability. Those more interested in improving their own tattoo trade can sign up for a seminar on equipment maintenance and honing technique. Considering the ubiquity of tattoos, as evidenced by the expanding popularity of this event, the demand for artists doesn't look to be dropping anytime soon.

Wrestlepalooza's
Arik Cannon

DARIN KAMINETZ



For more info, visit villainarts.com. \$20; \$40 festival pass. 2 to midnight Friday; 11 a.m. to midnight Saturday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday. 1300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis; 612-370-1234. **Through Sunday** -BRAD RICHASON

DANCE

Radical Recess

City Center Atrium

Shake the January blahs as three choreographers fill the City Center Atrium with dance that dares. This lunch-hour event is the second in the Radical Recess series, sponsored by the Hennepin Theatre Trust and curated by April Sellers and Laurie Van Wieren. Sellers' "ATM Advanced Transfer of Movement" takes place around an ATM machine, and anticipates what emotional monologues might be going on in the heads of customers seeking cash. Simultaneously, Taja Will's ensemble performs "Gospels of Oblivion," summoning a future time where extinction is imminent, and Dustin Maxwell presents a butoh-based solo. Radical Recess is a chance to get up close and personal with some of our hottest local dance artists, and audiences can choose to either stick around or just pass through. Free. 12:30 p.m. Mayo Clinic Square, 600 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-313-0520. **Also February 5 at the IDS Center and March 4 at Loring Park** -LINDA SHAPIRO

THEATER

Beauty Queen of Leenane

Park Square Theatre

When Sally Wingert sang "A Little Priest" in last fall's production of *Sweeney Todd*, who knew that her next show would prove to be an even darker ride? In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, playwright Martin McDonagh offers us a mother and daughter who put the "dys" in dysfunctional. In Theatre Pro Rata's production, Wingert stars as Mag, who shares the house with her daughter, Maureen (Pro Rata company member Amber Bjork). Maureen's life has been a hard one.

She is stuck in a continuing cycle of mental abuse with her mother, who manipulates the situation at every chance to gain an advantage on her daughter. Neither of them seem to be completely there mentally, which means the play's truth is often slippery. That only intensifies as Pato, a man who secretly admired Maureen as a youth, returns to town and offers an escape for the long-suffering daughter. As McDonagh's first play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* tackles issues that would continue on in the playwright's work like *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and *The Pillowman*. It also has the same pitch-black Irish humor that has marked so much of McDonagh's work. Theatre Pro Rata's Carin Bratlie Wethern directs, and the cast also includes company member Grant Henderson and Taylor Evans. \$40-\$60. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays. The show is in previews Wednesday, January 6-7. 20 W. Seventh Pl., St. Paul; 651-291-7005. **Through January 24** -ED HUYCK

SPORTS

Wrestlepalooza VII

First Avenue

Somehow, for whatever reason, combining pro wrestling with burlesque and live music just works. Now in its seventh iteration, Wrestlepalooza VII offers an evening of choreographed violence and titillation, mixing the high drama and athleticism of the ring with the playfulness and rhythm of striptease. Tonight's competitors include Johnny Gargano and Wildcat, the crime-fighting feline. Ladies will be duking it out as well, with Heidi Lovelace taking on Sally Stitches. Meanwhile, Queenie von Curves and Sweetpea will be sharing the love with a special burlesque performance for the evening. Providing tunes will be DJ Snuggles and Masked Intruder, who rock guitars and brightly colored ski masks. 18+. \$20. 8 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

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JAN. 7



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& HOUSE OF CASH

JAN. 8



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YOUNG NUK, SUICIDE THA
MONSTAA, JAVON JAY,
MURDA MEATCH, DYNASTY

JAN. 9



11TH ANNUAL A TRIBUTE TO THE LAST WALTZ

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& THE BELFAST COWBOYS

FRIDAY
THE LAMONT
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JAN. 15 & 16



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RACHEL ROBERTS
& JAKE NELSON

w/ ROADHOUSE 6

JAN. 22



HEADBAND JAM

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& THE WRONGS,
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JAN. 23



24TH ANNUAL SONGS OF FREEDOM BOB MARLEY REMEMBERED

Feat. INT'L REGGAE
ALLSTARS

FEB. 5 & 6



SLIPPERY PEOPLE

7TH ANNUAL TRIBUTE
TO THE TALKING HEADS

w/ BURBILLIES

FEB. 13

UPCOMING

- 1/14.....CRAM EP RELEASE PARTY w/ THE PALMER SQUARES, SPENCER JOLES & NAZEEM, BOOF SQUAD
& BEAT SETS BY: PRIME.CUT, PHIB & LOLAMBIE, BLAMSISS
- 1/30.....Blue Felix & Nuisance
- 2/4.....Beats.Bass.Cabooze. Feat. SPENCER JOLES AND NAZEEM, JUDAHBOY, LIKEMINDS,
AHHHVAHH, NICK JORDAN, 60EAST, TAYLOR RAVE & LIKE MINDS
- 2/11.....Ced Linus and Friends & Birthday Celebration
- 2/19.....Jacob Martin Band w/ ALANNAH MCCREARY
- 2/20.....Particle
- 2/24.....Bonerama
- 2/26.....Cannibal Corpse w/ OBITUARY, CRYPTOPSY & ABYSMAL DAWN
- 2/28.....Cradle of Filth: Inquisitional Tourture 2016 w/ BUTCHER BABIES & NE OBLIVISCARIS
- 3/4.....The Lacs
- 3/6.....Everyone Orchestra

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Continued From Friday

» FROM PAGE 27

FESTIVAL

American Kennel Club Dog Show

Saint Paul RiverCentre

Fans of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, which generally airs on Thanksgiving Day, will be able to see a competition live and in person this weekend, as over 2,000 pups will bark, prance, and tail wag in hopes of winning top honors. Over 155 different breeds will be on hand, including hunting, toy, terrier, and herding dogs. Will it be a miniature poodle, golden retriever, or some rare breed that takes home best in show? You'll have to attend to find out. In addition to the adorable and nail-biting competition, there will be obedience contests, fun animal demonstrations, a vendor floor, and goody bags for kids. For a complete competition schedule, visit onofrio.com. \$9. 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday; 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday. 175 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul; 651-265-4800. **Through Sunday**—JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SAT/1/9

ART/GALLERY

Wired

Kolman & Pryor Gallery

Many people are familiar with insomnia, though few of us have been inspired to capture it in artistic form. Christopher Atkins, a Twin Cities-based photographer, recently turned his camera lens on sleeplessness and collected an exhibition's worth of depictions of this mysterious ailment. "Wired: Photographs by Christopher Atkins" marks the first photography exhibition at the Kolman & Pryor gallery, and it's Atkins' second solo show. Primarily self-taught, Atkins, who has an extensive background in contemporary art, art history, and curation, showcases a wide range of work, including interior and exterior shots, both black-and-white and color images, and a mix of indiscernible and clear subjects. Minimally edited, the literal and evocative photographs in this exhibition present a stark documentary-style interpretation of what happens when one man finds himself wide awake in the middle of the night. "It's hopefully going to have some resonance with other people who have similar relationships with sleeping and being awake and technology," he says. "It's meant to be more widely resonant than, 'Woe is me.'" There will be an opening reception from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday, January 9. 1500 Jackson St. NE, Minneapolis; 612-385-4239. **Through February 20**—ERICA RIVERA



RICH RYAN

SPORTS

MINNESOTA REGIONAL POLE COMPETITIONS Maplewood Community Center

Anyone who has playfully taken a class or given it a whirl at a nightclub knows that pole dancing is no joke; it's intense and involves a great deal of practice and skill. These aerial athletes must have a strong grip, well-developed core muscles, and a practiced grace, whether they are holding a pose or spinning down to the ground. And forget about a fear of heights. Depending on the facility or performance venue, artists can climb their way 10- to 20-feet off the ground. This Saturday, folks will be able to take it in and learn a little bit about this bad-ass gymnastic art form, with competitions for novice, intermediate, advanced, and elite skill levels open to ladies and gents. Come watch as artists contort, twirl, and flex (often all while upside down). Interested in trying your hand at it? Workshops, seminars, and other learning opportunities will be available during festivities as well. For more info, visit poleandperformingart.com. \$30-\$60. 2 to 10 p.m. 2100 White Bear Ave., Maplewood; 651-249-2100. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

THEATER

24:00:00 Xtreme Theatre Smackdown 2016

Anne Simley Theatre

Theatre UnBound's Xtreme Theatre Smackdown, a festival where six new plays are written, staged, and performed over a 24-hour period, returns this weekend. For this year's event over 200 script "ingredients" — aka elements that must be used in each piece — were suggested and then voted on. Ingredients can be anything: a line of dialogue, an emotion, a prop, a stage direction. The writers have all night to pen their 10-minute script, then in the morning the plays are

A collection of found curiosities



JODY WILLIAMS

cast and rehearsed all day until the evening performance. Over 40 artists participate in creating brand-new works during the festival, which Theatre UnBound has been organizing since 2001. It's a world where anything goes, and creatives work at breakneck speed. \$21.99. 8 p.m. Hamline University, 1536 Hewitt Ave., St. Paul; 651-523-2905. —SHEILA REGAN

FAMILY/FESTIVAL

Winter 4Play

Fort Snelling State Park

It's not quite time for the Saint Paul Winter Carnival or the Luminary Loppet, but folks who love the great outdoors regardless of the season can warm up for the big celebrations at Winter 4Play. This daylong, family-friendly happening takes place at Fort Snelling, and will offer a variety of fun activities. Northern Lights.mn have designed ARTathlon, an artsy exercise course that can be explored via snowshoe or cross-country skis. The U.S. Forest Service will be taking people on hikes, and there will be plenty of opportunities to ice fish, skijor, toss snowballs, and listen to music. Then warm up with nosh from food trucks, take a break in the Little Box Sauna, or sip hot chocolate by the bonfire. For more info, visit 4playmsp.com. Free; valid state park vehicle permit required for parking (\$5 daily/\$25 annual). 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. 101 Snelling Lake Rd., St. Paul; 612-725-2389. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

ART/GALLERY

Bel Canto (Beautiful Song)

Gallery 427

The portraits by Nicholas Harper are often a little mysterious. From charcoal smudges a collarbone, a delicate lip, an arched brow emerge. Often there are halos reminiscent of Renaissance-era paintings. Some are dark with lettering, others are gold and shimmering. They harken back to previous eras and painting styles while also employing modern materials like glitter. Some subjects

are creature-like with elongated necks, colorful clothing, and wide eyes, while others are grounded in more recognizable body forms and relaxed, timeless facial expressions. See them yourself at "Bel Canto (Beautiful Song)," Harper's latest show, exhibiting at Gallery 427 this weekend. There will be an opening reception from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday, January 9. Northrup King Building, 1500 NE Jackson St., Minneapolis; 612-379-2237. **Through February 6** —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

MON/1/11

ART/GALLERY

Jody Williams: Circumstantial Evidence

Christensen Center, Augsburg College
"I contain multitudes," wrote Walt Whitman. The same could be said of Jody Williams, a local artist who collects and displays found objects and obscure items in art boxes. The Carleton College graduate and MCAD professor also handcrafts art books and publishes them under her Flying Paper Press imprint. Combining printmaking, etching, metalsmithing, drawing, poetry, and biology, her intricate pieces exude a fascination with the natural world, learning, and growth. Williams, whose works are included in the collections at the Walker Art Center, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the San Francisco Museum of Art, will exhibit 15 pieces of box and book art as part of her "Circumstantial Evidence" exhibition, opening Monday at Augsburg College. Japanese kozo, digitally printed Sakamoto paper, and cast bronze specimens are just a few of the treasures tucked into the boxes included in the show. A public reception takes place on Friday, January 22, from 6 to 8 p.m. for those who want to inquire further about Williams' tiny finds. 2211 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis; 612-330-1524. **Through February 19** —ERICA RIVERA

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- 1/25-26 WAR
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- 1/27-28 True Blues: Eric Bibb and Corey Harris
Acoustic Rural Blues
- 1/29 John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band
Bluegrass/ Roots Super Group
- 2/2 Charles Lloyd and Friends
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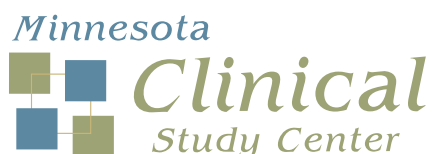
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Leonardo DiCaprio, as an 1820s fur trapper outmatched by the harsh realities of nature

KIMBERLEY FRENCH

Sometimes the Bear Eats You

Anomalisa's puppets are more expressive than *The Revenant's* humans

BY MICHAEL NORDINE

Two very different looks at humanity emerge on the big screen this week, but it's the one without any actual humans that has the most to say.

If *The Revenant* is any indication, it would appear that winning multiple Oscars for writing and directing *Birdman* has done little to brighten Alejandro González Iñárritu's worldview. The filmmaker's punishing follow-up to that ascendant tale is distinctly earthbound. A nearly silent Leonardo DiCaprio stars as an 1820s fur trapper named Hugh Glass whom a devious colleague (Tom Hardy), more than one Native American tribe, encroaching Frenchmen, and nature or seemingly the universe itself really, really want to see dead.

A bear mauls Glass within an inch of his life. His wife, a Pawnee, is murdered before the movie even starts. And his teenage son, an outcast among the bottom line-focused company that he and his father work for, has a target on his back for not being of European descent. *The Revenant* opens with a roving battle sequence of utmost intensity and, having established its grim tone, never strays from it once over the course of 156 minutes.

It's as though *The New World*, Terrence Malick's poetic reimagining of America's

creation myth involving John Smith and Pocahontas, has been filtered through a far harsher perspective. In both stories man finds himself outmatched by the harsh realities of nature in early America, but in only one of them is there anything redemptive to be found there — Malick looks for transcendence where Iñárritu is content to focus on unrelenting pain.

Masterfully made, *The Revenant* is marked by a number of arresting grace notes. An unremarked avalanche far off in the distance of a climactic search is a particularly stirring example of what Lubezki's camera can highlight in the periphery of the frame. But most of these moments are quickly followed up by blunt reminders of nature's cruel indifference (if not outright hostility).

If, by the 90-minute mark, you weren't already certain of the director's view of things, then a majestic buffalo stampede that quickly turns into a feeding frenzy for a few lucky wolves should leave no doubts. Iñárritu can never let moments stand on their own, often gorgeous terms; he always has to explicate their banal, bleak meaning. *The Revenant* isn't beautiful to look at because Iñárritu wants you take in the sights; it's beautiful because he wants you to know that there's nothing man can't ruin — or be ruined by.

Anomalisa co-directors Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson are interested in pain, too, but theirs is of the ultra-contemporary sort that isn't as outwardly visible. Michael Stone, a sad-sack public speaker in Cincinnati for a few nights on business, is their avatar for modern ennui. A bit of an asshole, he's clearly suffering from a longstanding bout of world-weariness.

He's also a puppet. If that seems strange for an end-of-year romantic drama, keep in mind that Kaufman wrote *Being John Malkovich* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* before writing and directing *Synecdoche, New York*. Like Iñárritu, the strange ideas that mark his early work have only become more prevalent with time; unlike him, they've also grown more nuanced.

Then Michael meets someone. Lisa's her name, and she's quite literally an anomaly. David Thewlis voices Michael, but Tom Noonan provides the voice of every other character in the film: cabbies, hotel receptionists, barflies, men, women, children. The only exception is Lisa. Without appearing in corporeal form, Jennifer Jason Leigh is as much a tonic here as she is in *The Hateful Eight*. After meeting her some 30 minutes into *Anomalisa*, she stands out to us as much as she does to Michael — a diamond in the rough, an exception to the rule. He's

instantly infatuated.

It helps that she's a fan of his. Michael has written a how-to book for customer service reps, and she's in Cincinnati to attend the conference where he'll be presenting. But even if their dynamic is off-putting — fawning fan and married businessman — you don't doubt where either is coming from. These are the most tired-looking puppets you've ever seen, their sagging bodies and droopy eyes betraying two lifetimes of disappointment and lowered expectations. Each sees a certain relief in their new lover, and maybe even some hope for the future.

Whether it lasts is not for this writer to divulge. Suffice it to say that Kaufman and Johnson evince a bittersweet (but not unbearably pessimistic) perspective that will most likely be validated by *Anomalisa* losing the animation Oscar to *Inside Out*. Maybe they'll learn more from the loss than Iñárritu did from his victory. **B**

THE REVENANT

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ANOMALISA

Directed by Charlie Kaufman
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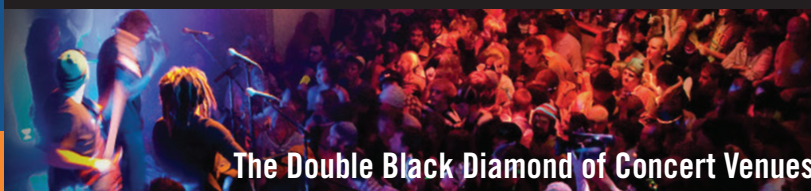
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MARCH 4 & 5 - THE BIG WU

MARCH 16-21 - DULUTSEN FEST

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The Best of 2015

The 10 finest productions in the Twin Cities last year

BY ED HUYCK

The Twin Cities never lacks for great theater, and 2015 reminded me why I have the greatest job in the world.

10. *Frankenstein*

Dangerous Productions' take on Mary Shelley's tale was messy, bloody, and scary as hell, especially when the only light came from flashlights carried by the actors.

9. *Annapurna*

A long-estranged couple comes together as one nears death. This was a story told with grace and humor by a pair of terrific performers at the Jungle Theater.

8. *Extremities*

Dark & Stormy brought audiences into a living room where a young woman fought off an attacker — and was then forced to decide whether he lived or died. Compelling acting and directing meant we also lived and died with every twist.

7. *The Jungle Book*

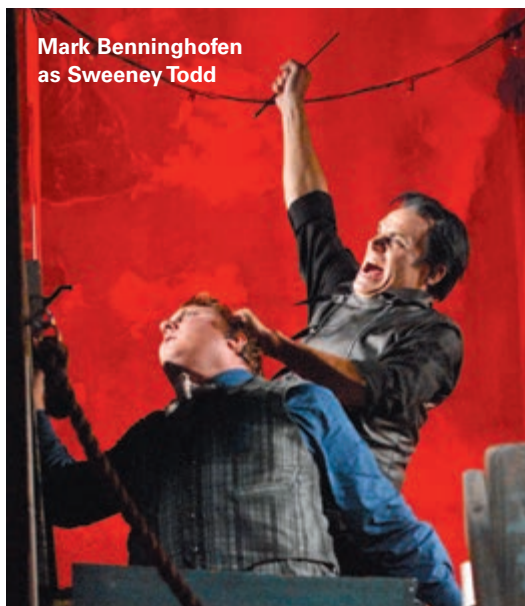
The upcoming film will have a hard time topping the Children's Theatre Company's engaging, engrossing, and — above all — fun production.

6. *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*

Molly Brown rose from rags to riches in the rough and tumble West. Her undeniable spirit made you positively giddy as she fought against the snooty upper class. Solid performances, a clever set, and strong singing made this a musical delight from Ten Thousand Things.

5. *The Woodsman*

Walter is not a good man. He has just been released from prison for sexually assaulting a young girl. On the outside, he's cut off from his family, eyed with suspicion by the police, and haunted by the desires he still feels. Adam Whisner gave one of the performances of the year in Theatre Pro Rata's production, which forced us to feel the monster's humanity.



Mark Benninghofen
as Sweeney Todd

GEORGE BYRON GRIFFITHS

4. *Juno and the Paycock*

Joe Dowling said goodbye to two decades at the Guthrie with his best directing in years. This rich production about impoverished tenement dwellers during the Irish Civil War was both hilarious and heartbreaking.

3. *An Octoroon*

This tremendous piece tackled America's race issues head on, retelling a 19th-century melodrama about a young woman whose part-slave ancestry could ruin her. It soon became clear we really haven't come that far in the last 150 years.

2. *105 Proof, or the Killing of Mack "The Silencer" Klein*

In this *Breaking-Bad*-in-the-Prohibition-Era tale, a small-town bootlegger falls in with Chicago mobsters. As he rises in the organization, the safety of his family and hometown are threatened. It was a tale told with rare verve and almost unbearable intensity.

1. *Sweeney Todd*

Fueled by Mark Benninghofen's stunning performance in the title role, Theatre Latte Da's dark carnival of a musical featured a barber who kills his clients and cooks their remains. The grimy vibe added a razor's sharpness to Stephen Sondheim's gorgeous score. **C**

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Peter Parker, the new music director at Go 95.3

TONY NELSON

Giving Rap Another Go

Can new radio station Go 95.3 finally make rap and hip-hop stick on Twin Cities airwaves?

JACK SPENCER

Last year, Pohlads Family Cos. purchased KNOF (95.3 FM), the former Christian radio station Praise FM, for \$8 million. For months, the future of the frequency remained a mystery. But on Monday it was revealed that Praise would become contemporary rap station Go 95.3 FM, the latest addition to the Pohlads' Go Media banner that also includes alt-rock/Twins destination Go 96.3 FM. The announcement was met with much excitement, but raises an important question: Can the rap/hip-hop format finally stick in the Twin Cities?

Count radio personality Mr. Peter Parker among the true believers.

"This is like the Ketel One of rap stations," says Parker, who serves as music director and drive-time DJ for Go 95.3. "We're more art- and culture-driven. This place needed what's happening now. I'm excited to give it to them."

Go 95.3 launched Tuesday with an uninterrupted string of 10,000 songs; Parker is the station's lone DJ, but more will be added soon.

The Twin Cities hasn't had a strictly modern rap format on the radio dial since B96,

which switched to Top 40 in 2010. That left Minnesota without any full-fledged hip-hop radio stations until a pair of throwback outlets owned by corporate chains — Hot 102.5 and 105 the Vibe — emerged last year. Go Media president Sam Elliot Gagliardi recruited Parker to help mold Go 95.3's identity, one that focuses simultaneously on a hit-driven rhythmic radio format (i.e. Drake, The Weeknd, Rihanna, Rick Ross) and an indie/local angle (national indie acts like Vince Staples, Action Bronson, and Chance the Rapper, plus Twin Cities acts like Atmosphere and Allan Kingdom).

In 2006, Parker arrived in the Twin Cities via Boston, where he had studied Rhymesayers and organized indie-rap shows in a similar DIY fashion. "I was doing the same thing they were doing in Boston, [but] I kind of branched out [to] do this terrestrial radio," he says. During his four years DJing at B96, Parker pushed Twin Cities artists into the same on-air conversation as chart-topping rap hits.

Parker worked to convince upper management to allow him to showcase local artists like Slug, Muja Messiah, and St. Paul Slim on his recurring HomeGrown Heat-Rocks segment. That regional emphasis

would become a staple of his radio career, extending from his time in Boston to stops in Washington, D.C., and Cleveland.

"That's what I really learned when I was here — I really understood how to celebrate the artist," Parker says. "I may not rap anymore, [but] I'm an artist at the core. I love picking an artist's brain — what's your process like, what are you feeling?"

Radio in the Twin Cities market has proven tumultuous in the past, and frequent format changes across the dial have made the prospect of a rap station surviving seem dicey. Hot 102.5 and 105 the Vibe were welcomed by a listener base yearning to hear rap on the radio outside of occasional blocks on KMOJ, Radio K, and the Current, but the future of the retro rap/R&B format remains uncertain. Go 95.3 hopes to stand out by tapping into what it feels fans are looking for: a blend of chart-toppers and underground artists, plus a strong representation of the diverse local scene.

"Thanks in large part to the crew over at Rhymesayers, the hip-hop scene in Minnesota is one of the best and most diverse in the country," Gagliardi says in a press release. "The only thing that is missing is a radio station that focuses on mixing the

best local music with the biggest national acts and songs."

Adds CEO Joe Pohlads, "It's time to use the same modern approach and bring the modern hip-hop channel to life."

"This isn't a niche thing," Parker declares. "We're going to be competing in the marketplace."

During Parker's stints in other markets, he came to recognize Minnesota as an anomaly in terms of listenership, noting that fans of all types seem equally interested in what's going on in hip-hop, nationally and locally. Rhymesayers' annual Sound-set festival influenced the approach to Go 95.3 — "40,000 kids can't be wrong, bruh," Parker points out.

It's a risky format, and past rap radio stations have opted to adhere to a playlist stacked with songs of proven popularity. Some of the artists Go 95.3 plans to keep in rotation, from Chance the Rapper to Action Bronson to Atmosphere, see very little radio play. But listening habits have changed drastically over the past several years, and there are now numerous metrics by which to gauge an artist's popularity. Part of Parker's involvement with Go 95.3 is crafting a playlist using numbers that go beyond charts, taking into account artists' video plays, online streams, and concert draws.

"Nontraditional radio artists, they're kings to us. Vince Staples sold out the Fine Line," he notes. "Kanye and Drake have inspired this whole generation of regular-guy, artist- rappers, instead of the street characters, and you can see the reflection on guys like J. Cole and Kendrick. Everybody's kind of now copying that sound, where 10 years ago people were copying Nelly and Lil Jon. The local artists of Minnesota, whether it's P.O.S or Allan Kingdom or Muja Messiah, or any of these cats, their sound now kind of matches that. That's kind of our mantra, that's our core sound."

To hear the excitement in Parker's voice when detailing the station's concept makes it clear that it's driven by a hip-hop fan rather than an indifferent programmer. But passion for hip-hop isn't necessarily enough to sustain an audience, and ratings speak more loudly than words. While the future is unwritten for Go 95.3, the station represents the evolving relationship listeners have to music in 2016.

"There's more millennials in America than any other generation," Parker says. "So we listen to music differently, we interact with each other differently. This station and this formatting will reflect exactly what's happening today. It's gonna be a celebration, that's the best way I can say it. We're really starting a new chapter." **CP**

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Thou

TRIPLE ROCK SOCIAL CLUB, FRIDAY 1.8

When Rhode Island metal band the Body came to the Triple Rock back in May, there were far too few fans in the crowd. Perhaps, with the dawning of summer, people weren't as interested in hunkering down on the West Bank to be aurally pummeled. Now it's full-blown winter, and the other side of the Body's sludge-metal coin — collaborators/friends Thou — are gracing us with their lone regional show. It only takes a few minutes off any of the Louisiana quintet's five studio albums to find out what attendees will be in for. What sets Thou apart from many of their counterparts, however, is vocalist Bryan Funck's ability to scream bloody murder while still being understandable. "Through doubts and fears/And all that makes the difference/I see an end," he wails on "The Wheel Weaves As The Wheel Wills." Do these words represent a light at the end of Thou's tunnel? We may find out soon. Here's a bright spot: Thou's 2014 release, *Heathen*, was named the best metal album of 2014 by Pitchfork. Opening are Fister, False, and Nüve Sense. 18+. 9 p.m. \$10-\$12. 629 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-333-7399. —MICHAEL CYRS

Dengue Fever

ORDWAY CENTER, SATURDAY 1.9

What do Khmer classical music, surfing, mosquito-borne disease, psychedelics, and punk have in common? Quite a lot, actually, in the creative mitts of L.A. sextet Dengue Fever (in lowercase, a tropical malady), whose exotic sound drifts from misty Cambodian temples to California beaches, Memphis to CBGB. The band's focal point is Cambodian singer Chhom Nimol, whose serpentine flutters weave through a curious mix of 1960s Cambodian pop (a synthesis of Khmer tradition and American incursions of the era), and splintered bits of new wave, punk, blues, African rhythms, and even sinuous Ethiopian jazz. Holding it all together are brotherly DF masterminds Zac (guitar) and Ethan (keyboards) Holtzman. On their latest album, *The Deepest Lake*, DF expands their palette even more — deeper blues, wilder dual vocal forays by Zac and Nimol — while heading on a new tack of more extended and improvisational jams. Characteristic of DF's deft eclecticism is "No Sudden Moves," which includes surf guitar, Nimol's vocals shifting from yearning undulations to hard-edged rapping, honking R&B horns, and twisting, funky grooves. \$23-\$27 7:30 p.m. 345 Washington St., St. Paul; 651-224-4222. —RICK MASON

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music»

though standout Cali psych-rock outfits like the Thee Oh Sees still put out strong albums, fans seem to be looking elsewhere for '60s-inspired jams. Fortunately for us Twin Cities buffs, we have acts like the Blind Shake, who give us that warm throwback feeling right here in the frozen Midwest. BS's 2015 album, *Fly Right*, is just as fun and danceable as ever, but now they have added flashes of ingenuity, like the squelching Indian guitar sounds on "Holy Road." Also performing at the Turf's Annual Blowout showcase are Birthday Suits, who will bring their Clash-inspired grooves into the mix, and Ripper, who are fresh off the release of last month's *A.D.* cassette. 21+, \$8-\$10. 9 p.m. 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul; 651-647-0486. —MICHAEL CYRS

Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues

DAKOTA JAZZ CLUB, SUNDAY 1.10

Blues and classical are seemingly odd musical bedfellows. But when harmonica ace and pianist Corky Siegel puts them together in his acclaimed Chamber Blues project, the funky union ultimately sounds like a natural blend. Siegel formed the Siegel-Schwall Band with guitarist Jim Schwall in the '60s. After the group started out in Chicago blues clubs, it wasn't long before they were engaged in groundbreaking collaborations with the San Francisco and Chicago symphonies. Siegel has been bringing the Delta and the Danube together, as he once said, ever since. As Chamber Blues, with longtime collaborators the West End String Quartet, Siegel is even more eclectic, tying classical to the likes of zydeco and bluegrass through percussionist Frank Donaldson's global rhythms. Slyly wailing like Larry Adler covering Sonny Boy Williamson, Siegel and his cunning strings are sublime. This performance will feature tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts. \$30. 7 p.m. 1010 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis; 612-332-5299. —RICK MASON

Dr. Mambo's Combo

BUNKER'S, SUNDAY & MONDAY 1.10-11

It was a notable year for Minnesota: In 1987, the Twins won the World Series, Prince released one of his best albums in *Sign 'O' the Times*, and St. Louis Park's own Coen Brothers released their first great comedy, *Raising Arizona*. It was also the year that Dr. Mambo's Combo was formed, and it just so happens that their crowd-pleasing funk/R&B sound has endured well enough to land them a regular Sunday/Monday night residency at Bunker's. You might wander in with a "nothing else to do tonight" attitude, only to have your head blown clean off by their top-notch soul sounds, the end product of decades' worth of hard work and refinement. \$7.9-30 p.m. 761 Washington Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8188. —NATE PATRIN

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SAVAGE LOVE

Phones and Bones

And the true meaning of feminism

I'm a 45-year-old straight male. Politically and socially, I consider myself an ardent feminist. There is nothing I enjoy more than giving a woman an orgasm or two. I'm very GGG and will cheerfully do whatever it takes. Fingers, tongue, cock, vibrator — I'm in. If it takes a long time, so much the better. I'm okay with all of that.

Now and again, though, I really like a quickie, a good old-fashioned “Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am!” The only ladies I've found willing to engage in those cock-centric acts are sex workers. I'm okay with that, too. But the last time I paid for it, with a woman I had patronized before, I was just about to slip my cock in doggy-style when her phone rang. It was in reach, and she picked it up! I hesitated, but she

didn't pull away, and in fact pushed back a bit while she answered. I figured this was what I came for, so I proceeded. Her cavalier attitude toward being fucked from behind while having a trivial phone conversation wound up being a huge turn-on for me. By the time she finished her 20-second call, I was finished as well. I hadn't come that quickly since I was a teen. She laughed that she should take calls more often. What kind of beast am I that I really enjoyed such utter indifference? Does this reveal some dark secret deep in my psyche? How can that mesh with my otherwise feminist views?

PREMATURE EJACULATION NEEDS SOME
INTROSPECTIVE VIEW EXAMINED

First, PENSIVE, “enjoys giving women orgasms” sets the bar for “ardent feminist” just a bit low. So here's hoping your feminism involves more than penetrating a willing partner with your fingers, tongue, cock, and whatever vibrators happen to be lying around. Because if your feminism doesn't include support for prochoice policies and candidates, regular donations to Planned Parenthood, backing equal pay for equal work, speaking up when other men say shitty/rapey/dehumanizing things about women (particularly when there isn't a woman in the room whose pussy you want to lick until you come, because feminism!) — and more — then you're not a feminist, ardent or otherwise.

Moving on Why did it turn you on

when the sex worker took a call during your session? Because it did. Turn-ons are subjective and mysterious. People who are curious about their turn-ons have to start with “this turns me on” and work backward from there. And to figure out why a particular fabric/adornment/attitude/scenario arouses us, we use the only tools available

to us — guesswork and self-serving rationalizations — to invent a backstory that makes some sort of logical sense, and then we apply it to something (kinks, turn-ons, orgasms) that really defies logic.

So, PENSIVE, if I were to hazard some guesswork on your behalf, I'd probably go with this: Being treated with passive contempt by someone that you are supposed to be wielding power over (the woman you're

fucking, a sex worker you've hired) — being subtly humiliated and mildly degraded by that woman — taps a vein of eroticized self-hatred that makes you come quickly and come hard.

And while that's wonderful for you, PENSIVE, it isn't proof you're a feminist.

I thought your advice to SCRAPE, the guy whose penis was suffering due to his girlfriend's shaved-but-stubby labia, was spot-on — except in regards to waxing. As both a former professional waxer and a woman with very coarse pubic hair, I hope you don't mind if I correct you: Waxed hair does not grow back as prickly as shaved hair. The hair follicle tapers from its root. When shaved, it is cut straight across at its thickest point. The hair, as it grows, continues to grow from there. When waxed, the hair is removed at its root, and a new hair will grow intact, with the softer taper. I cannot shave without extreme discomfort during regrowth (like needles in my undies!). SCRAPE's girlfriend's post-wax stubble may still be too uncomfortable for him, but it will doubtless be an improvement. Honestly, I'd be amazed if she's not currently in more pain than he is!

SMOOTH MOVES

Thanks for sharing, SM.

mail@savagelove.net

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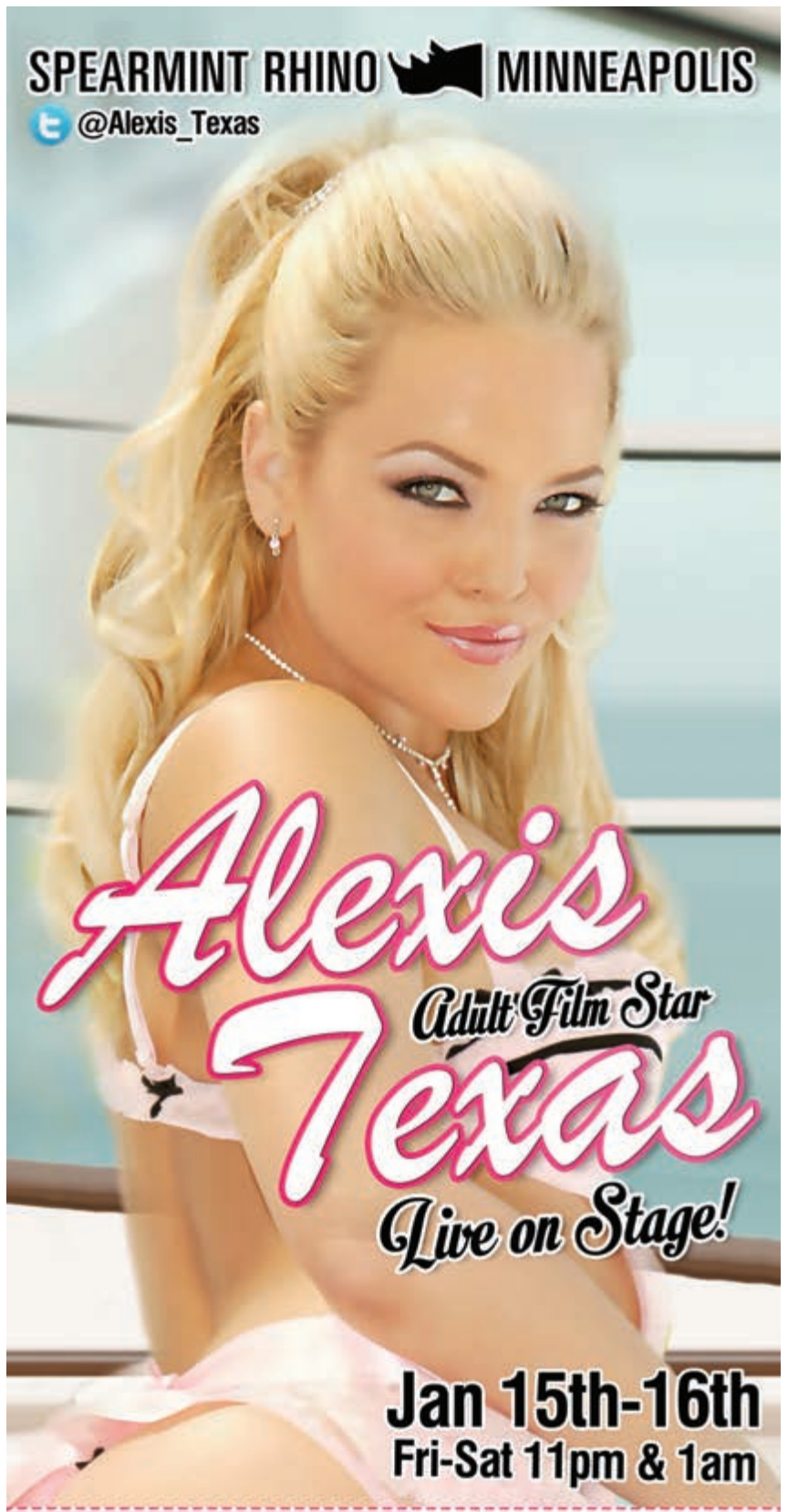
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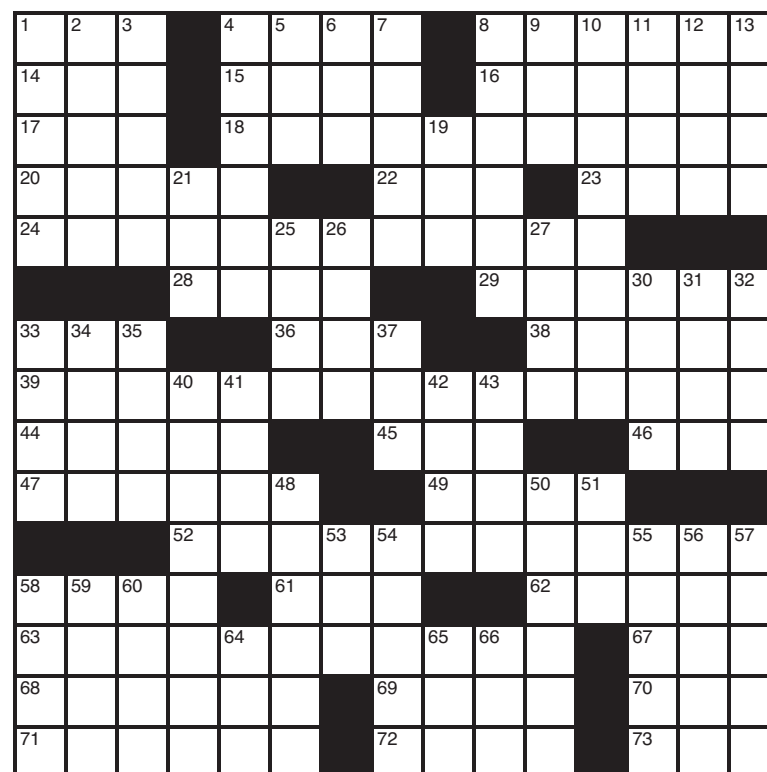
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- 1 Christmas leftover?
- 4 Repeated passage, in music
- 8 Heckler, often times
- 14 Have to return
- 15 Obstacles for some supergroups
- 16 Short play
- 17 "In the Heart of the Sea" director Howard
- 18 Something served in the court covered with rainwater?
- 20 Hit below the belt
- 22 Guest's bed
- 23 GI fare
- 24 "Spielberg, meet this Wookiee"?
- 28 Dramatic song sung in Italian, maybe
- 29 GM tracking system
- 33 Planks targets
- 36 Turn on the waterworks
- 38 Rock with a sparkling middle
- 39 Paul Reubens after being punched in the face?
- 44 Reprobate
- 45 "Why ___ you still here?"
- 46 Show that's already had Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as guests
- 47 Squirrel's stash
- 49 He kills Cassio
- 52 Transitional parts of the Thin White Duke's songs?
- 58 There are 27 in a perfect

Down

- 61 Clothier Taylor
- 62 Tar bed
- 63 One who has seen a New Zealand bird?
- 67 Phrase said when the lights come on
- 68 Enter, as data
- 69 "Render ___ Caesar..."
- 70 Nuke in the microwave
- 71 Make a rating of
- 72 "Allow me"
- 73 Storm's dir.
- 1 Parts of a table setting
- 2 "Make me!"
- 3 Montagne of NPR
- 4 "Jeremy" singer
- 5 "Avengers: ___ of Ultron"
- 6 Cut (down)
- 7 Freudian subject, briefly
- 8 *sigh* "Oh, guys..."
- 9 1/3rd of a banana?
- 10 "Hmmm..."
- 11 Dragon's home
- 12 ___ homo
- 13 Lines on an Uber app
- 19 Sports announcer Buck
- 21 Actress Mendes
- 25 "Sweet"
- 26 Elwes of "The Princess Bride"
- 27 "Picnic" dramatist
- 30 AAA rides
- 31 Yemen's gulf
- 32 Fisherman's device
- 33 Start of a spell?

- 34 Voting group
- 35 Palm-tree variety
- 37 Passing word?
- 40 Place to leave your recycling
- 41 Reno game
- 42 Small quantity
- 43 Brandied fruit
- 48 Rustic lovers
- 50 Big name in electric guitars
- 51 "___ To a Grasshopper"
- 53 Pick-six: Abbr.
- 54 Blah feeling
- 55 Barely touch one's food
- 56 Tom's "Mission: Impossible" role
- 57 Mold or fashion
- 58 Deep-fried Southern veggie
- 59 Quick turnarounds?
- 60 "Used to be," back in the day
- 64 Green Bay's st.
- 65 SAE, e.g.
- 66 Place to get off, briefly

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